

VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Class C Families]

- *565 291 During the day young boys go about with only shorts on, or with both shirt and shorts, depending upon the weather. Girls always wear a dress. Children who are in the crawling stage become extremely dirty because of the amount of dirt tracked into the house from the streets, although this is now changing as a result of paving. Babies, however, seem to have a propensity for getting into the charcoal sack, usually kept near the kitchen stove, and emerging well blackened. They are bathed twice daily, morning and afternoon, at first in cold water to accustom them to the cold water they will be using for the rest of their lives. Bathing the child is usually considered a pleasure for the mother as well as the baby, as is breast feeding. If the child of light-skinned parents exhibits the genipapo (a bluish spot near the base of the spine, sometimes known as the "Mongolian blue spot") the mothers will take care not to let visitors see it, as the spot is thought to be a strong indication of the nearness of Negro ancestry. It disappears after the child is seven or eight months old.
- *565 515 854 The men and older boys of Class C take their daily baths in the afternoon, either at one of the two wells which are behind the convent and therefore out of sight of the town, or at wooden structures which have been built across the wells in the Cortume. They stand on a wooden floor and drop a small bucket on a string down into the water, which is hoisted up and poured over them, running back into the well with the soap suds and whatever grime has come off their skin. Frequently a woman when getting water will undress her son on the spot and pour buckets of water over him. This is not done after a boy has reached five years or six, however, and is never done to a girl of any age. The women and girls take a daily sponge bath in their kitchens late in the afternoon, before starting to fix the evening meal. None of the houses has toilet facilities other than a secluded place in the back yard. During a survey of housing facilities in the town, when the question was asked, "Do you have a toilet?" the answer was usually laughingly given, "What for?" (But practically everyone knows what a toilet is, and there are several different types in the town, belonging to upper-class houses. The construction of a flush type, with an adequate cesspool, has been known for many years.) After the daily bath most people put on clean clothes in which they often sleep, although sleeping garments range from daytime clothing to long nightgowns, shorts, or nothing at all. Daytime clothing for the men consists of little more than trousers, shirt, and wooden shoes
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teenth. Tapa and Haussá were spoken during the entire nineteenth century, and the latter perhaps long before 1800. Although the Haussás were relatively few in number, their influence was considerable. The slave revolts of the early nineteenth century were, as we have seen, led by this reputedly "most intellectual element" among the imported Africans, many of whom could read and write Arabic characters. Kanúri, spoken in Bahia by the Bornús, and Grúnce, the tongue used by the slaves known as Gallinhas, are included, along with Haussá, Gêge, and Tapa, in the limited vocabularies which Rodrigues collected from Bahian Negroes near the beginning of the twentieth century." Tshi (or Odji), Gá (or Acrá)," and Mandê (or Mandinga) were also employed to a limited extent.

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As late as 1900, Negro laborers in Bahia continued to wear "white vestments of coarse cotton cloth," which reminded Rodrigues of "the Nagô *camisús*."¹³ The *Bahiana* costume,¹⁴ of partial African origin, was extensively used by the Negro women. It was also customary for them to carry their babies bound to the back with a large cloth. African dishes, in the preparation of which *azeite de dendê* (oil of the *dendê* palm) and *pimenta da costa* (pepper from the West Coast) prominently figured, formed a considerable portion of the Negro diet.

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At that time, also, African music might be frequently heard, particularly in the ceremonies of the *candomblé*. African musical instruments, like the *atabaque*, the *agê*, the *cansô*, the *marimba*, the *agôgô*, the *caxixi*, and the *xáque-xáque*¹⁵ were commonly employed. The fetich cult drew allegiance from numerous and zealous devotees.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-21.

¹⁴ Spoken in Bahia by the Ashantis.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

¹⁶ The *Bahiana* costume is described in detail in chap. ix.

¹⁷ These instruments are described in chap. ix.

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Stewart recounts of Rio in 1852 that "two black African women, richly and fashionably attired, came sauntering along with the most conscious air of high-bred self-possession. They were followed by a black female slave, also in full dress, carrying a black baby three or four months old, and decked out in all the finery of an aristocratic heir—an elaborately wrought, lace-frilled and rosetted cap, and long flowing robe of thin muslin beautifully embroidered, and ornamented with lace."¹⁰¹

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A fashion which in the early part of the nineteenth century served "to mark the high rank of those (of either sex) who adopted it" was that of "permitting the nails of the fore-finger and thumb to grow to a great length . . . [and be] cut to a sharp point."¹⁰² Today, while the whites in Bahia no longer follow this fashion, one occasionally sees individuals of prominence in the Negro group—for instance, Mãe Anninha of the *candomblé* of São Gonçalo—with long fingernails.

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However, assimilation is not a process in which the individuals of only one of the races in contact are modified thereby while members of the other race remain unchanged. Circumstances in Brazil were such as to favor the taking-over by the whites of certain African elements. One rarely found a white child, especially during the slave period, who had not been reared by a Negro *ama*. She "gave him of her own milk, rocked him in his cradle or hammock, taught him his first words of halting Portuguese, his first Padre Nosso, his first Ave Maria, his first 'vôtel' or 'oxente'; she put into his mouth the first *pirão* with meat and

¹⁰¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 303.¹⁰² Andrew Grant, *History of Brazil* (London, 1809), p. 234.

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molho de ferrugem.¹⁰⁷ From her and from the *mucama* (maid), as much as, if not more than, from his father and mother, the white child learned to speak. And almost without exception, he was given a *muleque companheiro de brinquedo*, a little Negro slave of his own age and sex, to be his playmate and his almost constant companion.¹⁰⁸ José Veríssimo says that during slavery there was "no house which did not have one or more *muleques*, one or more *corúmins*, little victims consecrated to the caprices of *nhônho*:"¹⁰⁹ his horse, his *leva-pancada*, his servant, his companion, his friend."¹¹⁰ In 1821 Mathison saw on an estate near Rio "a number of fine Negro children playing in front of the house, and in the midst of them a younger brother of the proprietor, a lad about fourteen years of age, who had been brought up in this manner . . . like the Negroes."¹¹¹ Freyre has suggested that "very likely many a Brazilian child took for his first hero, not a white physician, nor a navy official or a lawyer, but a slave acrobat who knew how to execute the difficult pirouettes of the impromptu circuses and of the *bumbas meu bois*"¹¹² of the *engenhos*; or a Negro player of the trombone or the flute."¹¹³ Under these conditions it is not surprising that

¹⁰⁷ Freyre, *op. cit.*, p. 247. *Pirido* is made of manioc meal and meat broth; *molho de ferrugem* is oil of the *dendê* palm.

¹⁰⁸ Iacorda, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

¹⁰⁹ Slave rendering of *menino* (male child).

¹¹⁰ *A educação nacional* (Rio, 1906), quoted in Freyre, *op. cit.*, p. 248. A *leva-pancada* is one who "takes the beatings."

¹¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

¹¹² The *bumba meu boi* is still to be seen in the Bahian interior. It is a folk drama in which a man dressed to represent an ox plays a prominent role (see Arthur Ramos, *O negro brasileiro* [Rio, 1934], pp. 259-68; see also his *O folclore negro do Brasil* [Rio, 1935], pp. 103-14).

¹¹³ Freyre, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

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